

Govt. College for Girls, Ludhiana
Department of Psychology

BA I Semester 1

UNIT-I

Psychology as a Science and
Goals of Psychology

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Psychology as a Science

- The term 'science' is used for any systematically organized body of verified knowledge about a certain class of facts and events.
- Science emphasizes the search for truth. It collects related facts by the use of objective methods and develops a theory to explain the observed facts. It arrives at some laws and principles and on the basis of that it is able to predict the phenomenon.
- Science requires that hypotheses should be framed and tested and that results be repeatable and thus verifiable by others.
- Science also requires considerable vigor in the precision of measurement and in the effective control of relevant variables.



Psychology as a Science

- Psychology is also a science because of the following characteristics-
 1. Psychology discovers and explains the underlying laws and principles of behaviour.

It studies behaviour in order to understand it, explain it, predict it and ultimately manage or control it.
 2. Psychologists do experiments and make observations which others can repeat; they obtain data, often in the form of quantitative measurements, which others can verify.



Psychology as a Science

3. Psychology uses scientific methods to gather information and test ideas about human behaviour. Psychologists use a number of rather different methods to describe, predict, understand, and influence behaviour.
4. In psychology, experiments are conducted to establish cause-effect relationship between two or more sets of events or variables in a controlled setting.
5. Psychology involves an objective approach to study behaviour. Personal biases of the experimenter do not affect the results.

Psychology as a Science

6. In psychology behaviour is studied under controlled conditions. Psychologists can keep certain variables constant and can study the operation of only one variable or interactive effect of more variables at the same time.
7. In psychology data collected can be recorded, analyzed and interpreted statistically, thus ensuring objectivity.
8. In psychology experiments can be repeated and replicated with other populations to reach valid conclusions.

From the above discussion, it can be inferred that psychology is a science of human behaviour.

Goals of Psychology

Every science has goals. In psychology, there are four goals that aim at uncovering the mysteries of behaviour. These are: **description, explanation, prediction, and control of behaviour.**

1. Description of Behaviour

The first task in psychology is to make accurate observations about behaviour and noting everything about it: what is happening, where it happens, to whom it happens, and under what circumstances it seems to happen. Psychologists typically refer to such observations as their *data*.

Goals of Psychology

- Such behavioural data may range from the broadest, most global level down to the most minute, specific level.
- Whatever the level of analysis, psychologists strive to describe behaviour objectively- collecting the facts as they exist, and not as the researcher expects or hopes them to be.
- Because every observer brings to each observation his or her subjective point of view- biases, prejudices, and expectations- it is essential to prevent these personal factors from creeping in and distorting the data.

Goals of Psychology

2. Explaining the Behaviour

- After description of behaviour the next step is to explain why it is happening.
- Explanation of behaviour usually recognizes the fact that most behaviour is influenced by a combination of factors.
- Some of these factors operate internally, within the individual, such as genetic makeup, motivation, intelligence level or self-esteem. Other factors, however, operate externally such as peer- pressures or hostile and insecure environment. When psychologists seek to explain behaviour, they almost always consider both types of explanations.

Goals of Psychology

- A well-trained psychologist can explain behaviour by using his or her insight into the human experience along with the facts previous researchers have uncovered about the phenomenon in question.

3. Predicting the behaviour

- Determining what will happen in the future is a prediction.
- Often an accurate explanation of the causes underlying some form of behaviour will allow a psychologist to make accurate predictions about future behaviour.



Goals of Psychology

4. Controlling the behaviour

- For many psychologists, control is the central, most powerful goal.
- Control means making behaviour happen or not happen- starting it, maintaining it, stopping it, and influencing its form, strength, or rate of occurrence.
- Control of behaviour does not mean ***brainwashing***. The goal is to change a behaviour from an undesirable one to a desirable one.
- The ability to control behaviour is important because it gives psychologists ways of helping people improve the quality of their lives.

Goals of Psychology

- Not all psychological investigations aim to meet all four of these goals.
- In some cases, the main focus might be on description and prediction, as would be for a personality theorist who want to know what people are like (description) and what they might do in certain situations(prediction).
- Some psychologists are interested in both description and explanation.
- Therapists, of course, would be more interested in control.

Goals of Psychology

- Two types of research help psychologists accomplish the four goals just described:
- **Basic research and applied research.**
- The purpose of **basic research** is to seek new knowledge and to explore and advance general scientific understanding of human behaviour.
- **Applied research** is conducted specifically for the purpose of solving practical problems and improving the quality of life.





Thank You